

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 2-4 and amend claims 1, 6 and 10-11 to read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) In a spray or hatch cover for boats having a tension element provided at the edge of the cover for releasably holding the cover at a coaming projecting above the boat body and surrounding an aperture to be covered,

the improvement wherein the tension element is sufficiently non-stretchable that, when it is in place in the coaming, external forces acting thereon are unable to cause it to expand so much as to allow it to be removed from the coaming ~~can be expanded by hand only with great difficulty,~~ and wherein the tension element includes at least one manually-operable tightening fitting for tightening the tension element around the coaming.

2. - 5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 2 1, wherein each tightening fitting includes a manually

operable release mechanism for spontaneous extension or separation of the tension element.

7. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 6, wherein a first tightening fitting is located at a bow end of the spray cover in its attached position, and a second tightening fitting is located at a stern end of the spray cover.

8. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 1, wherein the tightening fitting is a pump clasp with a ratcheting strap working with it.

9. (Previously Presented) Spray cover as in Claim 1, further comprising a release device provided on the upper side of the spray cover that is located, when in the use position, above the legs of the person sitting under the spray cover, and is actuated by raising the legs, and acts upon an opening mechanism ~~at~~ of said at least one ~~of the~~ tightening fitting.

10. (Currently Amended) Spray cover as in Claim 9, wherein the ~~opening mechanism~~ release device includes a release device band connected at both ends ~~of~~ to the spray cover,

which in the use position of the spray cover is positioned above the legs of the person seated under the spray cover and has practically no slack, and wherein the spray cover may be stretched out in a direction perpendicular to its plane because at least one of (1) the elasticity of the material and (2) its dimensions ~~being~~ are greater than those of the aperture of the boat.

11. (Currently Amended) Spray cover as in Claim 10, further comprising a pull strap that extends from the release device band to the opening mechanism.

12. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 1, further comprising an additional rubber cord that is stretchable by hand is provided for preliminary positioning of the cover on the coaming.

13. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 12, wherein the rubber cord is stitched to the edge of the cover.

14. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 1, wherein the tension element is held within a hollow cavity at the edge of the cover.

15. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 12, wherein the rubber cord is held by the seam that forms a hollow cavity at the edge of the cover.

16. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 12, wherein at least one of the rubber cord and tension element is shaped as a tube in whose interior the tension element and the rubber cord, respectively, extends.

17. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 12, wherein the tension element is held within a series of loops or rings at the edge of the cover.

18. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 1, further comprising a shaped piece associated with each tightening fitting which, in the use position of the cover, is inserted between the tightening fitting and the coaming, and whose shape is matched on the one side to the contour of the coaming, and on the other side to the shape of the tightening fitting.

19. (Previously Presented) Spray or hatch cover as in Claim 1, wherein the shape of the rear side of the tightening fitting matches the shape of the coaming.